

sideways so as to be latched by a lug formed in the compartment and protruding from an inner wall surface thereof.

In the prior art female connector, the lug formed on the inner wall surface of the compartment of the female connector cannot be seen from the outside. Consequently, it is impossible to visually judge whether such a lance as surely or as not been latched by the lug. See, page 2, lines 2 - 8 of applicants' specification. This problem is solved, according to the present invention, by providing peep holes in at least one of the upper and lower walls of the female housing, such that the lugs engaging with the respective lances are exposed to the outside within the peep holes. The male housing is designed to cover and hide the peep holes as the female housing is inserted into the cavity of the male housing. Such is neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art.

The Examiner admits "Applicant's admitted Prior Art" does not include the presently claimed peep holes. However, the Examiner alleges the patent to Oda et al to disclose the peep holes of the present invention. This allegation is traversed.

The patent to Oda et al discloses a dielectric housing 11 of an electrical connector 10 which comprises a contact-receiving passageway 13 in which an electrical contact 25' is secured by a resilient housing lance 14. A locking member 20, 25 is movable along the passageway 13 and has a projection 21 that is positioned in a space 15 between the passageway wall 13A and the housing lance 14 to prevent the housing lance from moving outwardly. A window 30, 31, 32, 33 in the housing 11 exposes a part 20b, 25b of the locking member 20, 25 when the projection 21 is positioned in the space 15, thereby indicating the securing of the contact in the contact-receiving passageway.

However, while the peep holes of the present invention expose the lugs engaging with respective lances for visual inspection, the windows in Oda et al. do not serve the same purpose. In Oda et al, the window in the housing exposes a part 20b, 25b of the locking member 20, 25. Since the part 20b, 25b covers the electrical contact 25', the contact 25' is not visible through the window 30a, 31a, 32 or 33. Moreover, since the portion of the electrical contact 25' secured by the resilient housing lance 14 does not appear to be aligned with any portion of the window (see Fig. 1), the window in Oda et al clearly is not the same as the peep hole of the present invention which exposes the lugs engaging with respective lances. The windows of Oda et al also include narrower rectangular sections to insert any tool such as a screwdriver, if necessary, to push to the tips of the locking members secured in the housing 11 in the direction as shown in the arrow C in Figure 2A of Oda et al. However, clearly these smaller rectangular sections are also not the same as the presently claimed peep holes.

The Examiner dismisses the foregoing arguments, stating that "[t]he idea of the visual inspecting window (peep hole) to inspect if an engagement of parts is completed correctly is well known and [the] window of [the] Oda et al. reference is only an example of using it." However, the Examiner has only shown that it is well known to provide a visual inspecting window for visualizing whether a locking member of the type described and shown as locking member 20 in Oda et al. is properly inserted in the housing. The Examiner has not shown that a visual inspecting window is well known to visualize whether a lug of the housing engages with a lance of a contact. In fact, while the Oda et al. patent discloses a lug 14 engaging with the contact, the windows 30a, 30b are not for visualizing whether the lugs 14 are properly engaged with the contacts.

Moreover, in Oda et al., the bent portion of the electrical contact 25' and the lance or lug 14, 14' did not face sideways in the dielectric housing 11, but face up and down. Aside from the positioning from the windows 30, 31, 32, 33 in Oda et al. being different than that of the present invention and offset from the position of the lugs 14 where they mate with the electrical contact 25', it would be difficult to use the windows to determine whether the lances or lugs 14 are engaged with the electrical contact projections even if the positioning of the windows 30, 31, 32, 33 was aligned with the tip of the lance or lug 14. This is because the projection of the electrical contact 25' and the lance or lug 14' would have to be viewed from the side to best determine whether or not they are in mating relation, i.e., from the side view shown in Figure 1 of Figure 6 of Oda et al., while the windows 30, 31, 32 and 33 expose parts of the locking members from the top or bottom.

Accordingly, there is no suggestion in Oda et al. or in any of the other prior art applied by the Examiner that one skilled in the art should use a window to visualize whether a lug of the housing engages with a sideways facing lance of the contact.

The Examiner cannot rely on general allegations that the peep holes of the present invention are well known. Such general allegations do not amount to the specific evidence necessary to support a rejection under 35 U.S.C 103. Neither Oda et al., nor any of the other prior applied art by the Examiner amounts to a specific evidence necessary. Therefore, the presently claimed invention is patentable over "Applicant's admitted prior art" in view of Oda et al.

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over "Applicant's admitted Prior Art" in view of Oda et al and further in view of United

States Patent No. 6,224,408 to Wu. Applicants traverse this rejection and request reconsideration thereof.

The patent to Wu discloses an audio jack which includes a casing 6, the bottom face 61 of which is provided with opening 631 and 632 that allow a user to visually observe the terminal members.

In the first place, the patent to Wu is directed to an audio jack, not to an electrical connector composed of female and male connectors. It is submitted one of ordinary skill in the art would not have looked to the teachings of Wu to modify the construction of an electrical connector. Accordingly, the Wu patent does not remedy any of the basic deficiencies noted above with respect to "Applicant's admitted Prior Art" and Oda et al.

Moreover, claim 2 requires the peep holes to be formed in both the upper and lower walls of the female housing. In Wu, the two openings 631, 632 are formed only in the bottom face 61 of the casing 6. See, column 4, lines 39 - 44 and Figure 5 of Wu. As shown in Figure 4 and as implied by column 4, lines 39 - 40 of Wu, the openings 631, 632 are not provided in the top face 60. While the Examiner refers to Figure 6 of Wu, it should be recognized that Figure 6 is a cross-sectional view of the audio jack, not a view of the top or bottom face. Thus, claim 2 is patentable over the proposed combination of references.

Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over "Applicant's admitted Prior Art" in view of Oda et al and further in view of United States Patent No. 5,960,138 to Shimoji et al. Applicants traverse this rejection and request reconsideration thereof.

The patent to Shimoji et al discloses a pair of optical connectors A and B that have improved fitting accuracy, wherein a backplane 1 to which one of the optical

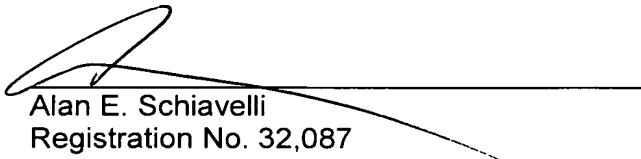
connectors is secured will be protected from damage by being pressed against the first one of housings 3 and 7. For this purpose, a resilient latching arm 8 protrudes from the second housing 7 towards the first one 3. However, since the Shimoji et al patent is directed to an optical connector, it is submitted one of ordinary skill in the art would not have looked to the teachings of this patent to provide a latching mechanism in an electric connector of the type presently claimed. Moreover, clearly nothing in Shimoji et al remedies any of the basic deficiencies noted above with respect to "Applicant's admitted Prior Art" and Oda et al. Accordingly, claim 3 is patentable over the proposed combination of references.

Applicants note the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 4. However, in view of the foregoing remarks, it is submitted all of the claims now in the application are in condition for allowance.

To the extent necessary, applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case: 514.43149X00), and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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